



Announcing the Formation of the Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking

Wildlife trafficking -- the illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife parts -- is a soaring black market worth \$10 billion a year, second only to arms and drug smuggling.

Unchecked demand for exotic pets, rare foods, trophies and traditional medicines is driving tigers, elephants, rhinos, exotic birds and many other species to the brink of extinction, threatening global biodiversity. Added to this is the alarming rise in virulent wildlife diseases, such as SARS and avian influenza, crossing species lines to infect humans and endanger public health.

In July 2005, at the initiative of the United States, G-8 Leaders recognized the devastating effects of illegal logging on wildlife and committed to help countries enforce laws to combat wildlife trafficking.

Building a Global Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking

Governments and non-government organizations worldwide have recognized the critical need to address growing threats to wildlife from poaching and illegal trade. The United States Government is working to build a global Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking -- CAWT -- to focus political and public attention on the issue and facilitate action for effective wildlife law enforcement and regional cooperation. CAWT welcomes the following organizations as initial partners in the global coalition:

- Conservation International
- Save the Tiger Fund
- Smithsonian Institution
- Traffic International
- WildAid
- Wildlife Conservation Society
- American Forest & Paper Association

CAWT focuses first on Asia

CAWT is focusing its initial efforts on Asia, a major supplier of black market wildlife and wildlife parts to the world, including North America and Europe, as well as a major market in itself. Many countries in the region are poised to take action, and CAWT aims to support them. In 2004 the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) -- Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam -- agreed to develop a Regional Action Plan on Trade in Wild Flora and Fauna. ASEAN environment ministers are expected to launch development of a regional law enforcement network when they meet in Bangkok in November 2005.

To support ASEAN actions, in July 2005 Deputy Secretary of State Robert B. Zoellick announced a package of U.S. Government wildlife initiatives that will help train law enforcement and other wildlife officials and prevent tiger poaching. Consultations are underway with the ASEAN Secretariat and member countries to implement these initiatives, which complement ongoing activities supported by US Government agencies and US-based non-government groups.

CAWT draws on U.S. experience and expertise

The U.S. Government is a world leader in combating wildlife crime at home and abroad. Under the Endangered Species Act and the Lacey Act, wildlife traffickers who break domestic or foreign laws can be prosecuted in the U.S. As a party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES), the United States monitors and controls imports of threatened and endangered animal and plant species. A number of Federal agencies are engaged in these efforts, including the Departments of the Interior, Justice, Agriculture, Commerce, Homeland Security and State and the U.S. Agency for International Development, among others.

Environmental and business organizations have a crucial role to play

Environmental groups, private sector corporations, foundations and other non-government organizations have been at the forefront of efforts to stop wildlife crime worldwide for many years. The commitment of these conservation leaders continues to be essential to the fight against wildlife poaching and trafficking.

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